

Roye, Edward James

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Edward James Roye and His Family,
a Portrait of a Black Midwestern Man during the First Half
of the Nineteenth Century

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12/10/70

Edward James Roye holds an important place in Liberian history during the middle of the nineteenth century as a businessman, member and Speaker of the House of Representatives, Senator, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, and finally President. Unfortunately his life has never been adequately studied. A variety of short biographical sketches have been written, often later ones merely restating earlier accounts.¹ All of these biographies recount very little of Roye's early life in the United States. Recently new evidence was uncovered concerning this period of his life, and this article attempts to provide a clearer picture of it.^{1a}

Edward Roye, a "man of color" to use the term found in the legal records of the day, was born on February 3rd, 1815, in the small town of Newark, the county seat of Licking County in east central Ohio.² The house in which he was born, according to local tradition, still stands today.³ Although the town at the time probably took no special note of this boy's birth, historians of Licking County today remember him with pride. After all, he is the only president of a republic that was ever born in that county.⁴

Roye's parents background can only be briefly sketched. His father, John Roye,⁵ was said to have been born in Kentucky, in slavery.⁶ However in time, he made his escape and fled

northward finally settling in Newark.⁷ He was among the early settlers of the town, for the town was founded and surveyed in 1802⁸ and by 1810 John Roye is recorded as having purchased a city lot, paying \$53.00 for it.⁹ The lot, lying one block south of the center of town where the courthouse stands, was on the opposite side of the courthouse from where an early map¹⁰ shows the Negro section.

Three years later, John Roye purchased an additional town lot lying contiguous to his former plot. This time he paid \$80.00 for the land.¹¹ Again the following year he purchased property, 100 acres of farm land in the northeastern section of Licking County.¹² Finally in 1817, he again purchased land, another 100 acres of farm land lying in Newton County, the county to the north of Licking. For this piece of land Roye paid \$262.50.¹³

One other aspect of John Roye and his family is known for this period. In the national census of 1820 he is listed with his family as consisting of four people. He and one other family of five were the total number of "free colored persons" in the town of Newark. Roye's occupation was given as being "engaged in agriculture."¹⁴ Thus the picture emerges that John Roye must have been a hard working and enterprising man since he was able to purchase so much real estate with the

amount of cash which was necessary. Certainly his later history, as we shall see, supports this evidence.

About Nancy Roye, John's wife and Edward's mother, we know very little. She may have been born about 1764¹⁵ and apparently was originally from Virginia.¹⁶ But how she met John Roye, or how she came to Ohio is not clear. She is first mentioned in a legal document when property which John Roye bought became his and his wife's joint property and was sold in 1822.¹⁷ In this document she is clearly listed as John's wife. A record of their marriage, if it occurred in Newark, apparently does not exist.

From the documents both Nancy Roye and her husband seemed unable to write, which would not be surprising considering the chances that Blacks born in the South had at that time for an education. However, clearly this inability did not hamper their legal transactions. In fact from the evidence the Roye family was able to prosper with at least little legal difficulty, although of a different race from most of the other members of the community, and although laws existed which were clearly discriminatory towards them, such as the law which prohibited them from offering testimony in cases where a White man was party.

Nothing is known of Edward Roye's early years. However when he was about seven in September 1822, his father and mother sold all their property for five hundred dollars.¹⁸ Shortly afterwards his father left Newark moving westward, leaving his wife and young Roye behind. Why he left is not clear, and in fact, it is not possible to pick up his trail again until 1826 in Terre Haute, Indiana.

The education that would eventually provide Edward Roye with the means for success and fame is shrouded in some mystery. Roye's first biographer, the well-known West Indian-West African, Edward Wilmot Blyden, who personally consulted Roye concerning his past¹⁹ wrote as follows:

Among the few colored children admitted to the schools of Ohio at that period was the subject of this sketch. His thirst for knowledge soon became apparent, and he made rapid progress in reading, writing, arithmetic, and other branches of elementary knowledge. After a while he gained admittance to the Newark High School, an institution which had numbered among its preceptors men eminent for their literary acquirements, among whom was the distinguished elocutionist, Bronson. During the time that young Roye attended, it was taught by Mr. Chase, the present [1870] Chief Justice of the United States,

There are several difficulties with this account.

Although young Roye may have attended the first school built in Newark in 1825,²¹ the existence of an actual high school in the city until considerably later is uncertain. In

addition, it is not clear that Sherlock Anson Bronson, whom Blyden presumably meant in his sketch of Roye, ever lived in Newark. Bronson was made assistant principal of Norwalk Academy in 1826 and did not leave the school until 1829.²² It is true that Bronson did settle in Granville, Ohio, a nearby town to Newark, but that was not until 1837.²³

Likewise Salmon Portland Chase, who is also mentioned by Blyden, similarly does not seem to have lived in Newark. During the years in question, Chase first lived in Washington and in 1830 moved to Cincinnati where he established himself as a lawyer. During the subsequent few years he apparently remained in Cincinnati.²⁴

Thus it is not completely obvious what young Roye's education actually consisted of, even with the detail that we are given by Blyden's biography of him. In any case, we do know that Roye did receive academic training, which in time would lead him to receive a higher education.

In the meantime, other events were taking place concerning his family and himself. By 1826 we know that his father, John Roye, was settled in Terre Haute, Indiana, which in that same year had an estimated population of 200 in the town plus many farmers in the surrounding countryside.²⁵ John Roye befriended James Farrington of that city and began

to work for him. Roye had a well-chosen friend. One biographer has said of Farrington:

Mr. Farrington was a model in every way. He was a lawyer by profession. His love of business, however, and the rare opportunities of his day to amass fortune lured him from his profession. His was the highest type of personal integrity. There was no stain upon his business transactions. He was a polite and cultivated gentleman; his hospitalities were faultless alike in substance and dispensation.²⁶

James Farrington was born in Boston, Massachusetts, in 1798 and attended Harvard Law School. Upon completion of his studies, he moved to Indiana eventually settling in Terre Haute in 1822.²⁷ He probably held fairly liberal political views, at least if his joining the Republican party shortly after it was formed is any indication. In fact, through his political activities, he was sent to the House of Representatives in Washington.²⁸

In the winter of 1825-1826, James Farrington was granted a license to establish a ferry between Terre Haute and the Illinois bank across the Wabash River.²⁹ John Roye was placed in charge of this ferry. However, he soon had difficulties, as the boat went adrift one night and was lost. Not until six months later was there information to the effect that it might have gone aground down river near Mt. Carmel, Illinois. In the meantime, Farrington had

charged Roye for half the cost of the boat.³⁰ At the same time, Roye continued to work for Farrington, acting as his agent to employ laborers to clear land and cut wood for him.³¹

Roye seems from the evidence to have been sufficiently enterprising and foresighted so that already at this time, he was beginning to purchase land as he had done in Newark. First he bought a town lot in Vandalia, Illinois, which at the time was still the state capital.³² The lot itself was only a few blocks from the capitol building, and he was able to purchase it for the sum of eight dollars.³³

At the same time, Roye also began buying farm land in the east central part of the state, so-called military land. By the time of his death, he had purchased three separate plots totalling 480 acres.³⁴ Thus, he continued a business pattern which he had previously begun in Ohio.

Upon settling in Vandalia, Roye apparently became a teamster, having purchased a wagon and set of oxen. Some of his time was spent hauling wood and hay for people in the surrounding area.³⁵

His residence in Vandalia was, however, to be relatively short. Sometime between July and November, 1829, John Roye died. During the last ten months of his life, he was periodically ill and needed assistance and nursing which was

provided by Fanny Hudley, a Black woman in the community.³⁶

John Roye anticipated his death as early as April of 1829 and thus wrote his son the following letter:

Vandalia, April 14, 1829

Dear Son,

I would inform you that I am very sick at this time hoping that these few lines may find you well. I have had the feever [sic.] this long time and am very low at this time. I wish you to have two quarter sections of land lying in the Military land in the State of Illinois and designated as follows...., likewise two town lots in the town of Vandalia that I own. I want you to have my waggon and two yoke of oxe that I own at this time. So I remain your father until death.

John Roy
to
Edward Roy³⁷

However, when John Roye died he left no will.³⁸ Thus it is not completely clear what provision was made for seeing to Edward's receipt of the property which his father had desired that he have. Certainly Edward came to know of the property, as it is mentioned by his biographer Blyden, even if the quantity of land mentioned is incorrect.³⁹ In addition, there seems to be no record of the subsequent sale of his town property, though it is possible that sale of the land was done under the names of the executors of the estate. Just what benefits Edward Roye derived from his father's property remain unknown.

In the meantime, John Roye's family in Newark apparently managed reasonably well on their own. In May of 1827 Nancy Roye, his wife, was able to purchase a town lot in Newark for the small sum of fifteen dollars.⁴⁰ In December of 1832, Edward, her son, purchased this same property from her for one hundred and fifty dollars.⁴¹ Possibly funds for this purchase came from money which Edward received from his father's estate in Illinois, though it is just as possible that these were funds saved from work pursued in the Newark area. It is said by some of his biographers that he was a barber⁴² although Blyden, his earliest biographer, makes no mention of it.⁴³ Certainly barbering would have been a very acceptable occupation for a Black. In fact, Newark did not have its first White barber until 1856.⁴⁴

By the time of his purchase of the town lot from his mother, Edward Roye, if Blyden is correct, had left Newark. During the Spring of 1832, at the age of twenty, Roye is said to have entered Ohio University at Athens, Ohio. The university today no longer retains any record of his attendance, even though Blyden states that he was there for three years until the end of the fall term in 1835.⁴⁵

In addition, Blyden mentions that Robert G. Wilson was at the time President of the university.⁴⁶ Wilson's

biographer states that he had been a pastor of a church in Chillicothe, Ohio, during the early part of the century,⁴⁷ and possibly through him Roye upon leaving the university was able to obtain a teaching position in that city.⁴⁸

Roye taught there during the year of 1836 but decided not to remain in Chillicothe. From there, according to Blyden, he made a business trip to New Orleans selling sheep from which transaction he was able to gain a profit of a thousand dollars.⁵⁰

During the summer of 1837 he was back in Newark. At that time he had negotiated with a Peter Lowell to rent part of his town lot for ten years. In lieu of rent during that period, Lowell was "to build and finish a frame house in a good and workman like manner ... one story and a half high with a brick chimney" which at the expiration of his lease he would turn over to Roye in good condition.⁵¹ The plan, however, does not seem to have come to fruition, for in July of 1839, the lease was cancelled.⁵²

In the meantime, during the fall of 1837,⁵³ Roye set out westward, as Blyden says, "to find the lands left him in Illinois by his father."⁵⁴ Apparently he took with him a variety of goods in order to carry on trade and make his trip profitable.⁵⁵ Roye, it seems, never reached Illinois; instead he decided to stop and settle in Terre Haute,

Indiana, where his father before him had also spent some time.

By the beginning of the new year, Edward Roye had begun to establish himself in Terre Haute. On January 19, 1838, he, in partnership with a White, John E. Dixon, purchased a half lot within sight of the courthouse square from Matthew Stewart and his wife, Elizabeth.⁵⁶

Roye's association with John E. Dixon, whether for better or worse, was to continue for the next six and a half years that Roye resided in Terre Haute. Dixon was among the first settlers of Terre Haute, having settled in 1816 in the area called Honey Creek just to the north of the site where the town was laid out.⁵⁷

Matthew Stewart and his wife came to Terre Haute in 1829 and established a hotel known as Stewart House. It was considered the best hotel in the city.⁵⁸ The property which Roye and Dixon bought was contiguous to Stewart House. In addition to its location, what is interesting about this purchase, is the fact that the country and, as a consequence the city's banking institutions suffered severely after the financial crash of 1837.⁵⁹ Thus it is notable that Roye and Dixon were able to pay the large sum of seven hundred and fifty dollars for the property.⁶⁰

The following year on April 3, 1839, Roye was again involved in land transactions. This time he bought out Dixon's portion of the half lot they owned jointly, paying five hundred dollars for the northern half of the half lot.⁶¹ However, just twenty three days later, on April 26, Roye resold the whole property to Dixon. The deed states that it was for the sum of \$546.50.⁶² However, on the same day a mortgage was signed by Dixon to pay for the property in which he agreed to pay an initial sum of \$193.00 and gave Roye three promissory notes for the next eighteen months due in three installments every six months, each payment being \$186.16.⁶³ Thus the total sum to be paid by Dixon would have been \$739.48.

Just what Roye's activities were in the city and why he was involved in these property transactions are not clear. From the documents we do learn that he had taken a wife, Harriet. She was originally from the state of Virginia, as Roye's mother also had been.⁶⁴ But when and where they were married is unknown. They are not listed in the marriage records of Vigo County for this period.

We do know that during the summer of 1839, Roye returned to Newark, Ohio, as he was involved in terminating the rental agreement concerning his town lot in that town in

July of that year.⁶⁵ We know that he remained there during the course of the following year, for in December of 1840 he is stated to be a resident of Newark.⁶⁶

During this year his mother died. According to the records kept at the old city graveyard in Newark, Nancy Roye was seventy-six years old at the time of her death. From the records, it is clear that she, as a Negro, was not given a special place of burial but was buried along side the rest of the residents of the city.⁶⁷

Meanwhile, Roye initiated action in Terre Haute to foreclose the mortgage agreement he had with John Dixon. Apparently Dixon came into severe financial difficulties as there were several court actions taken against him during 1841 and 1842 due to indebtedness.⁶⁸ In fact in one case he even used the land that he mortgaged from Roye as collateral for a loan of \$1,000 for another person.⁶⁹

Roye, represented by the law firm in Terre Haute of Griswold and Usher, had his case successfully adjudged. Dixon being unable to pay the debt and interest due, was forced to sell the property at public auction. Through his lawyers on December 25, 1841, Roye repurchased the northern half of the half lot for two hundred and five dollars, appraised at the value of three hundred dollars. The

southern half of the property was not sold due to the lack of bidders.⁷⁰

In the meantime, Edward and his wife returned to Terre Haute and remained in the city for the next four years. Presumably during this period their two children, Edward F. and Juliann were born.⁷¹

We know frustratingly little about Roye's life while in Terre Haute. The 1835 census of Terre Haute lists 47 Blacks out of a total population of 1,200. And the national census of 1840 shows 424 Blacks in Vigo County out of a total population of 12,076. The total population for Terre Haute in that year was 2,300; however, the number of Blacks living in the city is unavailable. But if the increase in Blacks was proportional to that of Whites between 1835 and 1840, their total number was still quite small.⁷² Thus Roye and his family, due to their business activities, must have been well-known in the community. Certainly when he returned to Terre Haute in 1850 after having left the place five years previously, he was cordially welcomed and received attention in two issues of the local paper.⁷³

Just what his business activities were in the city is somewhat uncertain. His biographer, Blyden, states that on the property which he had purchased stood a large two-story

building and in it he 'opened a shop ..., hired barbers, and established the first bath house in ... town".⁷⁴ There is other evidence which supports the fact that he did have a barber shop,⁷⁵ and his location next door to the most prominent hotel in the town must have been advantageous to his business.

Roye alludes, on his return visit to the city, to his "ancient benefactors".⁷⁶ Certainly his father's old friend James Farrington, who had continued to gain prominence in the community, surely was of assistance to him. When his mortgage foreclosure case was brought to court, he was represented by the prominent lawyers Griswold and Usher. Thus with people such as these assisting him, it was no wonder that, as the editor of the Wabash Courier wrote, "he was successful in business here".⁷⁷

However, even though he was among the fortunate Blacks to be well educated and even though his business prospered in Terre Haute, he apparently was troubled in mind. Why, is far from clear. He wrote:

"I have steadily had my mind fixed upon a foreign land, since my early youth; a land of African government; for there I believed our elevation would take place."⁷⁸

And in describing the kind of place he was looking for, he wrote elsewhere,

"I had avowed the intention not to put up with any kind of an African country, and to leave it to such another, if that sought measure of health, of prosperity, of happiness, and of the prospects of forming an asylum, from tyranny of every form, and wedded to religious and political independence, should not be full, both equally and satisfactorily apparent as the lot of all."⁷⁹

Just what it was which finally triggered his decision to leave, we do not know. During the early 1840's there was increasing debate in Indiana concerning Blacks and their ability to live freely in the state. On one side were the colonizationists who wanted to remove all Blacks from the state and send them back to Africa. Opposing them were many groups, among them the Quakers. In addition, many Blacks themselves were opposed to colonization and as a consequence held at least two statewide conventions where they expressed their opposition.⁸⁰

One of these was held in Terre Haute in 1842. Roye probably was involved in some way with the convention, being as he was, one of the leading Blacks in that community.

This discontent and discussion concerning the future fate of Blacks in the state may well have been a reason to trigger Roye's decision to leave. Also, he may have seen the handwriting on the wall for the future. Things had gone so far by 1853 that one representative in the State

legislature from Vigo Country, where Terre Haute is located, was able to propose a bill to encourage a spirit of colonization by preventing Negroes and Mulattoes from acquiring real estate. Another representative even had the audacity to propose that a bounty be offered for the taking of Negro scalps.⁸¹ None of these proposals carried, but they were indicative of the changing mood of Whites towards Blacks in the state, and surely it was already manifest even in the preceding decade.

Thus in 1845 Roye began disposing of his property with the intention of leaving the country. In March of that year he and his wife mortgaged their property in Terre Haute for one thousand dollars to be paid over a forty-month period at \$25.00 a month. The purchasers of the property were William Clark and his wife, Martha, and Joseph Patrick and his wife, Caroline.⁸² Very likely these were Black families, as Patrick was still in business as a barber in 1850.⁸³

In May of that same year, 1845, Roye returned to Newark, Ohio, and at that time sold his town lot, receiving \$528.00 cash for it.⁸⁴ Shortly after settling his business there, he moved to Oberlin, Ohio. One account states that he attended the college;⁸⁵ however, the college itself does not retain any record of his attendance.⁸⁶

His ostensible reason for attendance at the college was to learn French. Roye's thought at the time was to emigrate to Haiti. While at Oberlin, his mind was changed. Although he had always looked upon the various colonization schemes to Africa only as a means of further encouraging slavery in the South by ridding it of unwanted free Blacks and trouble makers who threatened the institution, he was persuaded by a fellow boarder at the school to visit Liberia. This man, himself, had lived in the country for three years, and knew what he was talking about.⁸⁷ The conversations were sufficient to change Roye's plans.

Due to the fact that in the meantime his wife, Harriet, had died, he felt it possible to, as he said, "take a little adventure to Liberia."⁸⁸ So, his plans were formed and his future course set.

Events moved quickly now. He went directly to New York in order to buy in a supply of goods to take out to Liberia for trading purposes. On May 1, 1846, at just over thirty-one years of age, Edward James Roye sailed from New York, and after a little over a month at sea, arrived at Monrovia, the capital of what was to be his future home.⁸⁹ Roye had already led a full and active life in the United States. He now began another one and in time would make an indelible imprint upon the history of Liberia.

Although he and his father are not remembered in Vandalia or Terre Haute, and even though memories of Edward Roye have taken on a misty quality in Newark, his name is still very well remembered in Liberia. And yet, even though somewhat forgotten in the history of the Midwest, the life that he and his family led in that part of the United States, though possibly not unique, does point out the fact that not all Blacks in America, or even Blacks in the North whose chances for success were somewhat better, fell into the stereotype of depressed, unenterprising and subservient individuals in their communities.

Svend E. Holsoe
Department of Anthropology
University of Delaware
October, 1970

NEWARK, Delaware 19711

Footnotes

1. "The Fifth President of the Republic of Liberia," African Repository (hereafter AR), XLVI (1870), 121-124; "Late from Liberia," AR XLVI (1870), 57; "Drowning of President Roye," AR, XLVIII (1872), 220-221; W. E. B. DuBois, "Edward James Roye," Dictionary of American Biography, ed. by Duman Malone (New York, 1935), XVI, 212; "Edward James Roye, Fifth President of Liberia," Negro History Bulletin, XVI (1952), 45; "Forgotten President," Echoes, The Ohio Historical Society, VII (June , 1968), 1; Nathaniel R. Richardson, Liberia's Past and Present (London, 1959), 106-108.
- 1a. I have deliberately added more detail to this account than might normally be necessary. My intention in providing this detail is the hope that others may pick up from here and pursue other lines of inquiry which some this information suggests.
2. "Fifth President," AR, 121.
3. "Forgotten President," 1.
4. Brandt D. Smyth, Early Recollections of Newark (Newark, Ohio, 1940), 86; "Newark Birthplace of Negro, Once President of Liberia," Newark (O.) Advocate, (June 20, 1967).
5. In most of the documents his name is spelled Roy. We have chosen to spell the name the way his son did.
6. A brief attempt was made to trace the family name in Kentucky. Two references which with further pursuit might prove fruitful are: The Register of the Kentucky State Historical Society, XLII (1944), 164 & ibid., LVI (1958), 341.
7. "Fifth President," AR, 121.
8. Smyth, Early Recollections, 13.
9. Deedbook D , County Courthouse, Newark, Licking Co., Ohio (hereafter, Newark Courthouse), ff. 179-180.
10. Map hangs at the Licking County Historical Society building, Newark, Ohio.

11. Deedbook E, Newark Courthouse, f. 60.
12. Deedbook I, Newark Courthouse, ff. 553-554.
13. Deedbook F, Newark Courthouse, ff. 517-518.
14. Population Schedules of the Fourth Census of the United States, 1820, Vol. 9, National Archives Microfilm Publication, Microcopy No. 33, Roll 94, 9-10.
15. Nancy Roye, Plot No. 197, Graveyard Register. Record kept at Licking County Historical Society, Newark, Ohio. If this lady was actually born in this year, she would have been about fifty-one years of age when young Edward was born. The census of 1820 (see, footnote 14) lists only two women in the Roye family, the oldest being between 26 and 45 years. Thus the information that Nancy Roye was 76 years old in 1840 as recorded in the graveyard register may well be incorrect.
16. "Address of President Roye at Leesburg, Va.," AR, XLVI (1870), 289-290.
17. Deedbook I, Newark Courthouse, ff. 553-554.
18. Ibid.
19. Edward W. Blyden to W. Coppinger, Jan. 7, 1870, Library of Congress, Manuscripts Section, American Colonization Society Papers, Vol. 15/1 (1869-1870), Letters Received, Letter No. 04387.
20. "Fifth President," AR, 121-122.
21. Smyth, Early Recollections, 40.
22. "Bronson, Sherlock Anson," The National Cyclopaedia of Biography (New York, 1897), VII, 5-6.
23. Ibid.
24. J. G. R., "Chase, Salmon Portland," Dictionary of American Biography (New York, 1930), IV, 28.
25. H. C. Bradsley, History of Vigo County, Indiana with Biographical Selections (Chicago, 1891), 385.

26. C. C. Oakey, Greater Terre Haute and Vigo County (Chicago, 1908), 70.
27. Ibid., 243; Blackford Condit, The History of Early Terre from 1816 to 1840 (New York, 1900), 109.
28. Oakey, Terre Haute, 244.
29. Ibid., 70.
30. Papers of Estates, Box 241, Package No. 5, John Roy, County Courthouse, Vandalia, Fayette County, Illinois (hereafter, Vandalia Courthouse). Letters and Receipts from James Farrington, July 15 and August 12, 1826.
31. Receipt, July 15, 1826, ibid.
32. Ibid.
33. Entry Ledger, Vandalia Lots -A, Vandalia Courthouse, f. 36, Square No. 36, Lot. No. 3.
34. Probate Court Record, B-1 (1829-1838), Vandalia Courthouse, f. 10; Blyden states that there were 640 acres, but this seems to be incorrect. "Fifth President," AR, 121.
35. Account between John Roy and Amos Swet, Jan. 22 to July, 1829, Estate Papers, Vandalia Courthouse.
36. Bill against Estate of John Roy by Fanny Hudley, Nov. 16, 1829. Estate Papers, Vandalia Courthouse.
37. John Roy to Edward Roy, April 14, 1829, Estate Papers, Vandalia Courthouse. In the probate records of John Roye's property, there is only mention of one town lot. Probate Court Record, B-1 (1829-1838), Vandalia Courthouse, f. 42.
38. Probate Court Record, A-1 (1821-1839), Vandalia Courthouse, f. 78.
39. "Fifth President," AR, 121.
40. Deedbook K, Newark Courthouse, ff. 288-289.
41. Deedbook Q, Newark Courthouse, f. 307.

42. Smyth, Early Recollections, 86.
43. "Fifth President," AR, 121-122.
44. Smyth, Early Recollections, 74.
45. "Fifth President," AR,
46. Ibid.
47. "Wilson, Robert G.," The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography (New York, 1895), IV, 443.
48. "Fifth President," AR, 122.
49. "Late from Liberia," 56.
50. Ibid.
51. Deedbook DD, Newark Courthouse, f. 370.
52. Ibid.
53. "Late from Liberia," 56.
54. "Fifth President," AR, 122.
55. Ibid.
56. Deed Record, No. 7 (1837-1839), County Courthouse, Terre Haute, Vigo County, Indiana (hereafter, Terre Haute Courthouse), f. 69.
57. Beatrice Biggs, "Keirny (?) Home, Honey Creek Landmark," Fairbanks Memorial Library, Terre Haute, filed under 'Terre Haute Historic Houses 1965 - '.
58. "Stewart Family" file, Fairbanks Memorial Library, Terre Haute; "Colonel William H. Stewart, obituary," Terre Haute Daily Gazette (June 14, 1895).
59. Albert B. Hart, "Slavery and Abolition 1831-1841," The American Nation: A - History (New York, 1906), Vol. 16, 296-308.
60. Deed Record, No. 7, Terre Haute Courthouse, f. 69.

61. Ibid., Page 492.
62. Ibid., Page 525.
63. Ibid., Page 526.
64. "Address of President Roye," 289-290.
65. Deedbook DD, Newark Courthouse, f. 370.
66. Edward J. Roy vs. John E. Dixon, Circuit Court Records, Terre Haute Courthouse, Box 36, No. 3600, filed December 14, 1840.
67. Nancy Roye, Plot No. 197 Graveyard Register, Newark. Unfortunately the Licking County Courthouse burned in 1874 and thus possible records of Nancy Roye's will in the probate court were destroyed.
68. Enock Walters vs. John E. Dixon, Circuit Court Records, Terre Haute Courthouse, Box 35, No. 3223, filed April 21, 1841; A. F. Woodward vs. John Dixon, ibid., Box 35, No. 3611, filed February 28, 1842.
69. John M. Gurney vs. John E. Dixon, ibid., Box 34, No. 3151, filed April 23, 1841.
70. Order Book No. 5 (Aug. 1840 - Nov. 1851), Circuit Court Records, May Term 1841, Terre Haute Courthouse, f. 96; Edward J. Roye vs. John E. Dixon, Bill of Foreclosure, Circuit Court Records, Terre Haute Courthouse, Box 36, No. 3600, filed Dec. 14, 1840, plus enclosures; Deed Record, No. 9, Terre Haute Courthouse, f. 327.
71. "Letters from Colonists," AR, XXII (847), 232; "Died," Liberia Herald (Monrovia), (April 28, 1848), 27; "Liberian Intelligence," AR, XL (1864), 137.
72. Bradsley, Vigo County, 433, 435; U. S. Bureau of Census, Sixth Census, 1840, Indiana (Washington, 1841), 80-81.
73. Wabash Courier (Terre Haute, Indiana), XVIII, No. 44 (June 29, 1850); ibid., XVIII, No. 45 (July 6, 1850).
74. "Fifth President," AR, 122.
75. Wabash Courier, (June 29, 1850).

76. Ibid., (July 6, 1850).
77. Ibid., (June 29, 1850).
78. "Letters from Colonists," AR, 232.
79. Wabash Courier, (July 6, 1850).
80. Emma L. Thornbrough, The Negro in Indiana, a Study of a Minority, (Indianapolis, 1957), 77-80.
81. Ibid., 84, ftn. 53.
82. Deed Record, No. 10, Terre Haute Courthouse, ff. 298-299.
83. Wabash Courier, (June 29, 1850).
84. Deedbook RR, Newark Courthouse, ff. 393-394.
85. "Late from Liberia," 56.
86. Copy of a letter from the Secretary (of Oberlin College Archives?) to W. E. Burghardt DuBois, Jan. 12, 1937.
In author's possession.
87. "Letters from Colonists," 232; "Fifth President," AR, 123.
88. "Letters from Colonists," 232.
89. "Fifth President," AR, 123.

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Barber rises to lead Liberia

African American (WV)

In 1843, Edward James Roye ran a large weekly block ad in Terre Haute's Wabash Courier, headlined: "PRODIGY! The 79 foot Barber-Pole — the loftiest in this part of Indiana."

Ambitious, educated and moderately wealthy, Roye carefully claimed only what he could prove. His shop, and its pole, were the biggest around.

Roye also was black, born free Feb. 3, 1815. His industrious father, John, was liberated in Kentucky and moved to Newark in Licking County, Ohio to raise a family. The descendant of a pristine Eboo tribal chief proud of his African ancestry, John Roye prudently invested in western frontier real estate.

When John died in 1829, Edward — a student at Newark High School where future U.S. Supreme Court Justice Salmon Chase was a teacher — inherited 640 acres near Vandalia, Ill. Education was the youth's priority. At 17 he entered Ohio University at Athens. When he was 20, he had acquired French language skills and accepted a teaching position in nearby Chillicothe.

Books whetted Roye's thirst to see the world. He bought sheep with his savings to trade in New Orleans at a profit. Confident in 1837 that his disabled mother was well-sheltered, he loaded his possessions into a horse buggy and embarked to inspect the endowment from his father.

Roye did not reach Vandalia



Historical Perspectives

By Mike McCormick
Special to the Tribune-Star

that year. The National Road transported him to Terre Haute; he stayed — at least intermittently — for eight years, purchasing a two-story building a few doors north of The Stewart House, the town's leading hostelry on North Second Street. Business blossomed, forcing him to hire more stylists.

Meanwhile, Roye was exposed to the American Colonization Society (ACS), an organization formed in 1817 to encourage transporting free African-Americans to West Africa as an alternative to emancipation. Terre Haute offered a chapter of the Indiana Colonization Society.

When his mother died in 1840, Roye's familial ties in the U.S. evaporated. Though he stayed in Indiana until at least 1845, exotic challenges intrigued him. One biographer suggests that he enrolled in Oberlin College to brush up on his French while pondering whether to go to Liberia, the ACS colony, or Haiti.

On May 2, 1846, Roye set sail from New York, arriving in the Liberian capital, Monrovia, on June 7. He made an instant impact. Within two years he was the country's top shipping merchant, acquiring an ample fleet and carrying his nation's flag into American and European waters. Elected to the Liberian legislature, in 1849 he became Speaker of the House.

His venture into politics was a fateful one. As a leader in the True Whig Party, Roye said Liberia, an independent nation after 1847, was decreed to champion the black race and should be governed only by "pure Africans."

Early Liberian settlers, largely mulatto children of freed slaves, were already politically entrenched and opposed the True Whigs' position. Joining with men like Edward Wilmot Blyden, Roye demanded immigrant screening to preclude "semi-pure African-Americans" from further enlarging their factional base.

When Vice President Edward "Frank" Roye visited Terre Haute in 1864, his popularity remained intact. Local journalists shared his affable wit and demeanor, accurately predicting that he might become chief justice of the Supreme Court.

Little did they realize that Roye, who was elected Liberia's fifth president in 1870, soon would become a brutal victim of his own idealism.

Continued next week

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TERRE HAUTE, INDIANA

Community Affairs File

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